

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Elliott, Ian (2020) Organisational Learning and Change in a Public Sector Context. *Teaching Public Administration*, 38 (3). pp. 270-283. ISSN 0144-7394

Published by: SAGE

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739420903783>
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739420903783>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/41830/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

Organisational learning and change in a public sector context

Ian C Elliott 

Northumbria University, Newcastle Business School, UK

Teaching Public Administration

2020, Vol. 38(3) 270–283

© The Author(s) 2020



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0144739420903783

journals.sagepub.com/home/tpa



Abstract

It is broadly accepted that learning is important in supporting the delivery of change. Furthermore, during times of public sector budget cuts there is a growing interest in innovation and change. However, it is also generally accepted that austere times typically lead to a reduction in training and development budgets – particularly within the public sector.

This paper explores the extent to which the assumed link between learning and change is contested during austerity. Fifty-one public sector managers from Wales and Scotland participated in the study, over a period of 13 months, from a wide range of public sector organisations across two devolved parts of the UK. The research explored issues surrounding motivations for learning, expectations of outcomes and perceptions around the drivers of change.

It is found that public sector budget cuts are having a direct impact on learning and development opportunities across the UK public sector. Whilst budget cuts may lead to change, this is likely to be piecemeal rather than strategic. In conclusion, this research supports the view that austerity is a barrier to meaningful change in the public sector and not a driver.

Keywords

Organisational learning, change, public services, austerity

Introduction

It is broadly accepted that there is a strong link between organisational learning and change (Tsang, 1997). At the same time there is a lack of consensus on how they are related and to exactly what extent. Indeed, there are even continuing debates on the very

Corresponding author:

Ian C Elliott, Public Leadership and Management, Northumbria University, Newcastle Business School, City Campus East, Falconar Street, Newcastle NE2 1UY, UK.

Email: ian.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk; Telephone: +44 (0) 191 227 4922

definition of organisational learning (Easterby-Smith et al., 1998; Tsang, 1997; Wang and Ahmed, 2003).

Within the public sector, austerity is seen by some as not affecting the likelihood of change (Wright et al., 2013) whilst for others it acts as a significant barrier (Roberts and Bailey, 2013).

This research begins with a consideration of the distinction between organisational learning and the learning organisation and how they each relate to organisational change. It then goes on to explore the relationship between austerity, learning and change in the public sector. The experiences of 51 public sector managers are taken into account in exploring the extent to which public sector cuts associated with austerity are having an impact on the nature and extent of learning within public sector organisations.

It is found that public sector budget cuts are changing the approach to learning and to organisational change. Specifically, organisations are increasingly viewing learning in an instrumental way linked to individual projects or activities rather than in a more reflective or holistic way. Likewise change is increasingly seen to be piecemeal and transactional rather than strategic and transformational. It is anticipated that further austerity will continue to limit the benefits of any learning and development and the likelihood of effective organisational change.

Learning organisation and organisational learning

There are multiple perspectives on the nature of change and multiple frameworks that illustrate these perspectives (By, 2005). Similarly, a number of approaches to organisational learning have been proposed, such as the learning cycle (Kolb, 1984); action research (Lewin, 1946); action learning (Revans, 1980); appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987); and the learning organisation (Argyris and Schon, 1978, 1996; Pedler et al., 1991; Senge, 1990). All these approaches recognise, albeit in different ways, the interconnectedness of learning and change as well as the relationship between the individual in making change happen and the organisation in providing a fertile environment for change to take place.

Much of the literature on organisational learning and learning organisation treats the two terms as interchangeable. Yet if we take organisational learning to represent, at least in part, learning and development opportunities that are either supported or coordinated by the organisation, it does not necessarily follow that the organisation is a 'learning organisation'. For example, Pedler et al. (1991) argue that a learning organisation should support individual learning in order to transform the entire organisation. Yet surely it does not follow that if an organisation is committed to individual learning it is also de facto committed to organisational transformation. As noted by Senge (2006: 129), 'individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning'. Likewise, an organisation devoted to learning is not necessarily a learning organisation.

Literature on the learning organisation emphasises the degree to which an organisation is skilled at the development and management of knowledge (Garvin, 1993). This also recognises the organisation as a fluid entity which embraces learning as an enabler of change in order to adapt and survive in a fast-paced environment (Senge, 1990). In

Table 1. A typology of learning and change.

	Learning organisation	Organisational learning
Type of learning	Double- and triple-loop learning	Single-loop learning
Approach to learning	Deep learning	Surface-level / instrumental learning
Locus of learning	Organisational culture	Individual people
Organisation of learning	Strategic	Piecemeal
Commitment to learning	Long-term	Short-term
Timescales	Continuous	Sporadic
Attitude to risk taking	Embraced	Avoided
Type of change	Transformational	Transactional
Evaluation criteria	Impact	Cost-effectiveness
Relationship to change	Integral	Ad hoc

comparison, organisational learning is arguably a broader and more fluid term. As such it is more difficult to define as it encompasses ideas of individual, team-based and organisation-wide learning activities. Typically organisational learning describes a range of isolated activities that are either organised or supported by the corporate centre in the form of learning and development opportunities for staff. As put by Wang and Ahmed (2003: 9), organisational learning is ‘the collectivity of individual learning within the organisation’.

For the purposes of this research it is purported that organisational learning is learning which takes place within an organisational context (typically an employer), whereas a learning organisation requires a deeper and much more substantive organisational commitment to learning as an enabler of change. Therefore the contrast is between learning within organisations and organisations that learn. As Tsang (1997: 146) points out, ‘a learning organization is one which is good at organizational learning’.

Table 1 provides a typology of what might be expected within a learning organisation, as opposed to an organisation which happens to have some ongoing learning activities within it. Whilst it is accepted that many of the features are difficult to measure and perhaps, in the case of the learning organisation, aspirational, they nonetheless provide a useful tool for exploring the extent to which an organisation is truly committed to learning as an enabler of change. The following section discusses how ideas associated with organisational learning and the learning organisation may manifest in the public sector.

Public sector context

The public sector is an interesting case in this context because public sector organisations are typically seen to be highly hierarchical and formalised organisations (Werkman, 2009). Consequently they are characterised as being resistant to change and not conducive environments for individual agency. At the same time many public sector organisations invest in learning as a tool to further enhance the scope for change. Therefore it is interesting to consider the extent to which an investment in organisational learning leads to a direct improvement in the opportunity for individual actors to influence change.

Of particular significance at present is the context of austerity. There are at least two ways in which austerity may be seen to impact on organisational change: employees' commitment to change and organisational commitment to learning.

In terms of employees' commitment to change it is generally accepted that people are more likely to embrace change when they see there is something to gain. Consequently it might be assumed that times of austerity – where change is often linked to cuts – are likely to bolster barriers to change as employees fear loss – either to the public service and / or to themselves personally (Levine, 1979). Within the public sector it is also commonly assumed that there is a link between perceived personal benefit and willingness to support change. However, Wright et al. (2013) have shown that a high public service motivation is likely to increase people's support of change, even in times of austerity and cuts. Therefore austerity may not directly affect people's commitment to change.

In terms of an organisational commitment to learning it is difficult to draw comparisons between public and private sectors. For example, statistics from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) would suggest that the median training budget in the public sector is significantly lower than in the private sector. Where private sector organisations are reported to spend an average of £372 per employee per year on training, this is only £238 in the public sector (see Figure 1).

However, these statistics only present a partial view of sectoral comparisons. Others suggest that the public sector spends significantly more on training and development than the private sector (Jewson et al., 2015). Yet this only serves to highlight the extent to which public–private comparisons represent a false binary. There is in fact little value in drawing on such comparisons for a number of crucial reasons, as have been widely discussed elsewhere (Boyne, 2002; Bozeman, 1987).

What is perhaps more informative is that 54% of public sector organisations have seen their training budget cut in 2015 compared with only 24% of private sector organisations, as demonstrated in Figure 2. These figures are collaborated elsewhere (Jewson et al., 2015) yet there is strikingly little research into the extent of cuts to training budgets and the potential impact that this may have upon the leadership of change in the public sector.

In 2015 the majority of private sector organisations reported an increase in their learning and development headcount and in their use of external associates compared to a decrease of both in the public sector (CIPD, 2015). What is more, only 8% of public

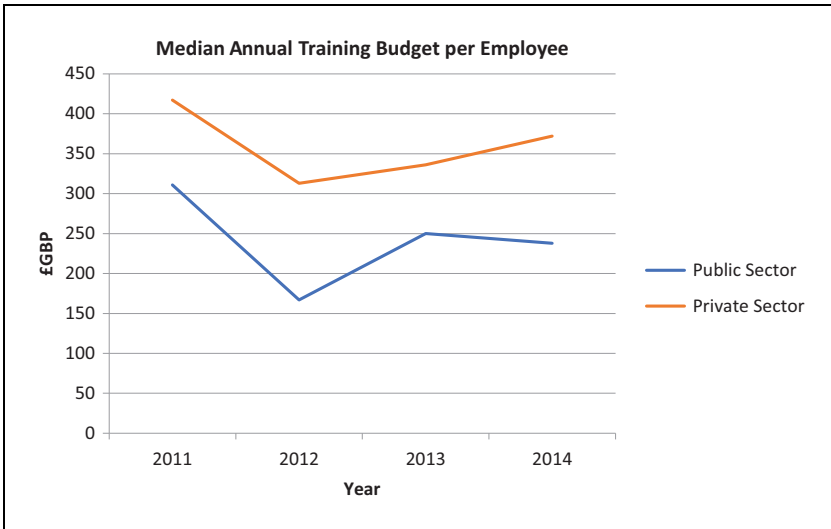


Figure 1. Average training budget in public and private sector organisations Source: Adapted from CIPD, 2014.

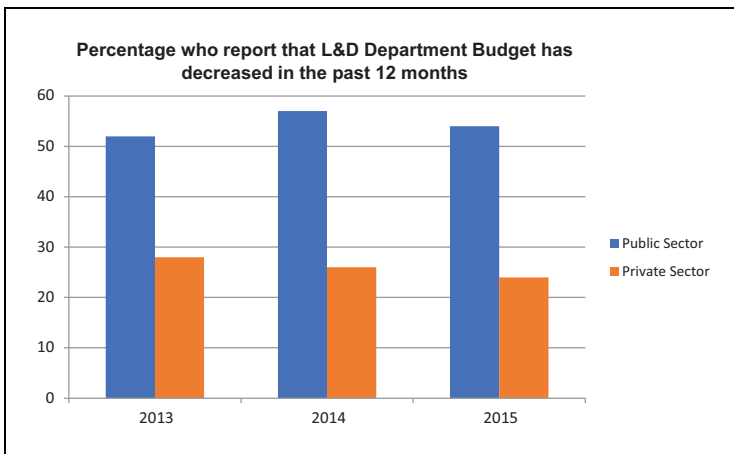


Figure 2. Reported change in Learning and Development Budget Source: Adapted from CIPD, 2013; CIPD, 2014 and CIPD, 2015.

sector organisations have seen an increase in their learning and development budget compared to 25% of private sector organisations. Others have reported that the number of public sector organisations with a training plan for the year ahead has fallen from 82.7% in 2005 to 74.6% in 2011 (Jewson et al., 2015). Thus there is some consensus on the view that austerity is having a negative impact on training budgets.

Method

In order to explore this in more depth, the following research investigates the extent to which the assumed link between learning and change is accepted within local government. The research goes on to assess perceptions on the extent to which austerity and resultant cuts to training budgets are likely to affect the barriers and enablers of change. The fieldwork comprised four stages, all conducted in 13 months between 2015–2016.

Firstly the study used a total of seven semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of former students in postgraduate public administration programmes. These participants were all middle- to senior-level managers from five local authorities, the devolved government and a national park in Wales. The interviews were used to understand people's motivations for study and the perceived benefits of study in relation to organisational change. In particular, issues around barriers and enablers of change were considered in relation to the impact of formal higher education and what impact austerity might have on readiness for change.

Later, three of the original seven participants agreed to take part in a follow-up interview (again from a range of local government, devolved government and national park). Prior to these interviews a short summary of key findings from the first round of interviews was circulated. These second interviews then allowed participants the opportunity to clarify and develop their thoughts from the first interviews.

In the third stage of the research a further five interviews were conducted with public sector managers from one local authority in Scotland. Again these interviews were used as a process of member checking and data triangulation in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Finally, a series of three focus groups was conducted with separate groups of middle- and senior-level managers from four local authorities and one part of the NHS in Scotland. Focus groups ranged in size from 6–18 participants with a total of 39 participants. With the focus group a nominal group technique was used to build consensus around the groups on what were seen to be the key enablers and barriers of change as well as to identify 'key players' and 'minimal effort' groups within a stakeholder analysis (Johnson and Scholes, 1999) for each of the local authority areas. This was to offer further insight and challenge to the initial findings in order to further enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This final stage also helped to develop more analysis of the extent to which learning was seen to impact on the enablers and barriers to change.

The research was conducted in line with university research ethics guidelines, procedures and regulations. All steps were taken to stress to participants that their participation was entirely voluntary and they were reminded at the start of interviews that they could elect to exit the research at any stage. To protect the identity of participants they have all been given synonyms in the below analysis.

Background of participants and engagement in learning and development

Participants were asked both about their motivations for working in the public sector and their motivations for learning. Many suggested, in line with findings from elsewhere (Wright et al., 2013) that public service motivation factors were significant in their career choice. But drivers for engagement in learning and development tended to be driven by more personal motivations. Indeed there was a lack of organisational drivers, motivators or expectations that people would take part in continuing professional development. Those who did cite an expectation of learning and development were typically bound by the requirements of professional bodies. Furthermore, it was noted by many that completion of training and development would not automatically lead to any salary increments, career progression or other benefits.

A number spoke of the fact that training budgets had been significantly reduced, that training budgets were likely to continue to reduce and that in any context of budget cuts training budgets were often the first to go. Indeed it was noted that budget cuts were viewed as 'quick wins' as the following extract from Fraser illustrates:

I had a meeting only last week when we were looking at how I'm going to make some fairly massive savings next year and one of the seemingly easy wins was to probably halve the relatively small budget for training and development.

This corresponds with evidence that suggests 52% of public sector organisations have had learning and development budgets cut compared to 28% in the private sector (CIPD, 2013).

There was also an acknowledged lack of strategic perspective in the way budgetary decisions were being taken. Fraser went on to say:

I think it's [the 50% cut to the learning and development budget] probably something that's just plucked from the air quite frankly. It isn't a figure that's going to go a long way to meeting the overall savings. It's only, it's a small sum . . . So it's very easy to think in terms of round numbers when you're looking to reduce it.

Similarly where decisions were taken on how learning and development spending should occur there were a fairly narrow set of criteria used, particularly in relation to the current needs of the job rather than any future view of changing organisational needs. Again this points to a lack of any strategic commitment to learning and development as part of a wider culture of supporting innovation and change.

It was also stated by many participants that learning and development was not a priority for their colleagues, as illustrated by Gareth:

You've got people who their ambition was to come and work for [this public body]. And once they come here they have no intention of leaving and it is fairly challenging then to get them to engage in a learning process after that. Y'know 'cause there is no aspiration to leave.

Benefits of learning and development

In terms of the benefits that accrued from learning and development, again these were framed largely in personal terms. For those who did not have a public sector background there was a sense of completing learning and development in a related subject in order to gain a better sense of how the sector works. Often this was referred to in terms of being able to perform better within their roles. It was also recognised that this could support progression within their organisations. But again this was informed by personal motivations and was not part of an organisational commitment to learning and development.

As Claire stated:

It is for career progression, I was always very clear that I wanted a career.

This personal motivation was often in contradistinction to the perspective of employers, as Claire goes on to say:

It was free, that is the biggest driver, y'know because that is the first thing you get asked about is 'How much is this gonna cost us?'

Whilst having a greater understanding of the public sector context was, for many, seen as having a personal benefit, there was also a recognition that a greater understanding could be used to influence change that would lead to positive outcomes for their employer. In this sense the public sector context and focus of any learning and development was seen as important. Consequently not all learning and development activities were seen as equally valuable. As Beth noted,

In the MBA public and third sector were never mentioned. At all. I've got my books here, never mentioned, corporate strategy it would just never be, it's all focus on um, spend and profit. Not on collaboration, efficiency, learning from others. So the public sector is a different animal altogether – it naturally includes that.

This supports the view that context-specific learning and development activities are essential to support effective change. A number of participants pointed specifically to an apparent deficiency in MBA study in failing to capture the complexity and political context of public sector organisations. Despite this perceived value in public sector sensitive learning and development many have lamented the waning of public administration programmes in UK higher education (Boyne, 1996; Chandler, 1991, 2002; Jones, 2012; Miller, 2012; Talbot and Talbot, 2014). This may suggest that any decline is not due to a lack of demand, but rather a lack of appropriate funding.

Other benefits of learning and development were seen to accrue from having time away from the workplace to reflect and think about current challenges from a distance. As Beth stated:

We never have incubation time. It's so hectic in [this part of the organisation] and I never get management incubation time, solution-building time, and working through that course, especially leading change, gave me a view, it made me step away from it and do a commentary on it. It was a self-analysis.

Networking opportunities that came with engagement in learning and development were also seen as important. This reflects the value of collective learning (Wang and Ahmed, 2003) and the wider experiential or informal elements of learning within a formal setting.

Yet all participants found it difficult to give specific examples of how meaningful change had been delivered better following their learning and development. This highlights the challenge of evaluating learning and development programmes – where outcomes can be multi-faceted, subjective and consequently difficult to measure.

Barriers to change

Whilst it proved difficult to identify ways in which change had been enabled by the participants' learning and development, there was a greater sense of awareness of persistent barriers to change. These included structural issues, social / cultural issues and financial constraints.

In terms of structural issues it was felt by some that the ability to influence change was affected by position within the hierarchy. Consequently it was at times felt that engagement in learning and development activity would always have a limited effect in relation to other personal factors such as attitude and emotional intelligence.

Indeed there was often a sense of frustration expressed by participants that, whilst they were committed to organisational change and service improvement, many of their colleagues remained resistant to change. This was exemplified by Fraser:

It's been a source of incredible frustration, I've never worked anywhere where I've found people so seemingly absolutely resistant to change... Whenever I've tried to introduce change I've come across incredible passive resistance of discovering that people just simply haven't done what they've been told to do and you discover later they've carried on doing it in the same old way.

Similarly organisations were often seen as being reluctant to invest in change that could potentially create longer-term benefits as there was an immediate pressure to realise benefits from as low an input cost as possible. The complexity of factors involved in resisting change reflects the findings of Kluipers et al. (2014), who note that there is no consensus on the causes of change resistance in the public sector. But there are certainly signs of the 'muddled thinking' described by Betts and Holden (2003) and a degree to which learning takes place in a context where the cultural and political paradigm of the organisation is not up for discussion or debate.

Many participants commented on the context of ongoing spending cuts as having created an environment where people and organisations were more risk averse. Reductions in staff numbers had led to an environment where there were fewer people available to implement and support change. There was also a greater emphasis on protecting core services rather than trying to do things differently. At the same time a number of participants commented on the nature of risk-averse public sector workers as creating barriers to learning and change. It was noted by Gareth that:

I think barriers come in numerous ways, I think one, it's the type of people and it's going to be very interesting to see if this changes over the coming decades, if you like, that there are, we still have a number of people working in public organisations that joined the organisation on a career-for-life basis and therefore they have certain expectations and an expectation that there is not going to be massive change within that. That in some ways comes out in particular with terms and conditions which actually makes it very difficult to change things. And certainly people tend not to move because of the pension requirements etc. are fairly generous and therefore why would they be in that position? Plus you have a fairly bureaucratic mind-set.

These findings reflect the views of those in the focus groups who consistently highlighted lack of capacity or resources as a key barrier to change. Indeed all focus groups found it much easier to identify barriers than to identify enablers of change. What is more, barriers to change were seen to be coming more entrenched. This was particularly the case with participants who were from local authorities, who described a lack of leadership capability and scope to try new things. This is perhaps not surprising when as much as 80% of local authority's budgets are consumed by statutory services (Elcock, 2013). In other words, there was a sense that the austerity cuts were leading to an increasing focus on protecting statutory services and anything else was increasingly being seen as superfluous.

So for many participants it was felt that the public sector remained reluctant to embrace change. Furthermore, and in contrast to the findings of Wright et al. (2013), austerity reforms were likely to increase resistance. Partly this was seen to be due to increased anxiety over the impact of change and partly because even those who might typically be supportive of change were now focused on preserving remaining levels of public services as much as possible. This is in line with the findings of Roberts and Bailey (2013), who found that austerity was leading to a reduction in the staff needed to support innovation and staff needed to identify and initiate innovation. At the same time austerity reform may also limit the extent to which methods to overcome resistance, such as the use of incentives (Thomas, 2006, as cited by Kluijpers et al., 2014), can be used.

Greater need for learning and development

It was felt that learning and development, if undertaken widely across an organisation, could help overcome some of the social and cultural barriers to change. In part this was seen as a potential counter to the perceived lack of willingness from some to accept the need for change. As Gareth suggested:

Learning is an opportunity of widening horizons and getting people to have an understanding y'know there are different ways of operating . . . undoubtedly learning opportunities do provide an opportunity of widening experience and identifying that there are different ways, and better ways, of doing things.

Therefore learning and development could be used to help people both understand the need for change and cope with the effects of change. Yet financial pressures were such that it was felt this was unlikely to happen.

During the second round of interviewing it was noted that resistance to change was also different within different elements of the organisation. In particular it was felt that middle- and lower-level managers were more resistant to change and also that trade unions would, along with some elected members, block any changes that would have a detrimental impact on staff. Within the focus groups elected members were also seen to be a key barrier to meaningful change. This was linked to a fear of failure which many felt was heightened by the increasing pressure on resources. Overall the reasons listed for resistance to change were multi-faceted. Most participants had a positive view of change and their learning had instilled ideas which they were keen to implement within their workplaces. Yet for many the focus of change initiatives was more on piecemeal cutback management (Levine, 1979; Schmidt et al., 2017) in line with 'salami-slicing' approaches which have been described as 'crude, knee-jerk management approaches' (Bailey, 2016: 50). This chimes with what others have found in relation to the challenges with implementing innovation and change in the context of austerity (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Lowndes and Squires, 2012). It is recognised that such cutbacks may cause a negative impact on staff morale and motivation (Esteve et al., 2017). This article suggests that, for those involved in this research, their experience of having recently undertaken a relevant education programme heightened the sense of demotivation as they had a sense of what strategic changes could be made but felt these were being ignored in preference for 'salami-slicing'.

Future change

Ongoing austerity meant that, for many, change was seen as inevitable. As Euan explained:

We've been going through two or three years of what we call efficiency savings. What we would infamously call doing the same things with less. We're now getting to the stage where I think in the next three or four years we've got about £30 million savings to find on top of what we've found already and we're starting the process of identifying where the real cuts would be or what we can stop doing altogether as opposed to just y'know pairing off a bit here and there.

Consequently, therefore, it was felt that change would occur across the public sector, as further austerity reforms were imposed. But there was a general sense that public bodies would continue to have a reactive and piecemeal approach to change. At the same time public sector organisations were seen to be increasingly risk averse and defensive in the face of continued public sector budget cuts.

Whilst some were committed to developing a strategic approach to change, there were many more who were pessimistic about readiness for change within their organisations. As Fraser summed up:

I think to be fair, I am, I am managing to make little changes. Perhaps ah, perhaps what I am learning is that one's got to be content with small victories, little changes, rather than expecting people to take on board and embrace something more major. So maybe I've learned about setting a realistic target rather than hoping for ah, transformation.

Yet, when it came to considering where this change might originate, the focus group participants held that the most significant enabler of change was legislation and political initiative. Linked to this was the commonly held view that elected members were the 'key player' in local authorities. In contrast members of the public, and particularly those who were not regular users of services, were seen to have lowest levels of power and influence in the stakeholder analysis. Consequently it would seem that significant change will not be stimulated by austerity without an accompanying degree of political leadership.

Conclusions

Much of the above analysis reflects the conclusion put forward by Betts and Holden (2003: 280) of 'ambiguity and muddled thinking in relation to the links between strategy and learning in organisations'. Change is certainly happening within the public sector and is likely to continue. Likewise there are many managers and employees who remain committed to learning. Yet the links between the development of a learning organisation and change have yet to be recognised to their full potential.

Specifically public sector organisations are seen to have many of the characteristics, outlined in Table 1, of engaging in organisational learning but exhibit none of the characteristics of a learning organisation. As such participants from the learning and development programme were unable to identify any significant organisational benefits from their learning and development. At the same time they were more conscious of the need for change, of the value of learning and development in enabling change and of the persistent structural barriers that they felt continued to block effective organisational change.

Austerity politics were seen to play a particularly significant role in stymieing organisational change. All participants noted continued cuts to learning and development budgets and staffing levels. Yet political leadership was required in order to enable such change to occur. In this context the opportunity, desire and ability to lead change was seen to be deteriorating. In the face of ongoing austerity it is perhaps unlikely that the benefits of learning and development will be realised in the public sector any time soon.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Ian C Elliott  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4622-298X>

References

- Argyris C and Schon DA (1978) *Organizational Learning*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Argyris C and Schon DA (1996) *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method, and Practice*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Bailey SJ (2016) Public policy and administration in an era of austerity: Rethinking local public services. In Klassen TR, Cepiku D and Lah TJ (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Global Public Policy and Administration*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 46–57.
- Betts J and Holden R (2003) Organisational learning in a public sector organisation: A case study in muddled thinking. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15: 280–287.
- Boyne G (1996) The intellectual crisis in British public administration: Is public management the problem or the solution? *Public Administration* 74: 679–694.
- Boyne G (2002) Public and private management: What's the difference? *Journal of Management Studies* 39: 97–122.
- Bozeman B (1987) *All Organizations Are Public: Comparing Public and Private Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- By RT (2005) Organisational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management* 5: 369–80.
- Chandler J (1991) Public administration: A discipline in decline. *Teaching Public Administration* 11: 39–45.
- Chandler J (2002) Deregulation and the decline of public administration teaching in the UK. *Public Administration* 80: 375–390.
- CIPD (2013) *Learning and Development – Annual Survey Report 2013*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- CIPD (2014) *Learning and Development – Annual Survey Report 2014*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- CIPD (2015) *Learning and Development – Annual Survey Report 2015*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Cooperrider DL and Srivastva S (1987) Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In: Pasmore WA and Woodman RW (eds) *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (Vol. 1). Greenwich: JAI Press, 129–169.
- Easterby-Smith M, Snell R and Gherardi S (1998) Organizational learning: Diverging communities of practice? *Management Learning* 29: 259–272.
- Elcock H (2013) *Local Government: Policy and Management in Local Authorities*. London: Routledge.
- Esteve M, Schuster C, Albareda A and Losada C (2017) The effects of doing more with less in the public sector: Evidence from a large-scale survey. *Public Administration Review* 77: 544–553.
- Garvin D (1993) Building a learning organisation. *Harvard Business Review* 71: 78–91.
- Guba E and Lincoln Y (1989) *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Johnson G and Scholes K (1999) *Exploring Corporate Strategy* (5th ed.). Harlow: Prentice-Hall Europe.
- Jones A (2012) Where has all the public administration gone? *Teaching Public Administration* 30: 124–132.
- Kluijpers B, Higgs M, Kickert W, Tummers L, Grandia J and Van Der Voet J (2014) The management of change in public organizations: A literature review. *Public Administration* 92: 1–20.
- Kolb DA (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

- Levine CH (1979) More on cutback management: Hard questions for hard times. *Public Administration Review* 39: 179–183.
- Lewin K (1946) Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues* 2: 34–46.
- Lowndes V and Pratchett L (2012) Local governance under the coalition government: Austerity, localism and the ‘Big Society’. *Local Government Studies* 38:1: 21–40.
- Lowndes V and Squires S (2012) Cuts, collaboration and creativity. *Public Money & Management* 32:6: 401–408.
- Miller K (2012) The future of the discipline: Trends in public sector management. In: Diamond J and Liddle J (eds) *Trends in Public Management: An Age of Austerity*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, pp. 1–24.
- Pedler M, Burgoyne J and Boydell T (1991) *The Learning Company*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Revans RW (1980) *Action Learning: New Techniques for Management*. London: Blond and Briggs.
- Roberts P and Bailey SJ (2013) Supporting organizational innovation in the public sector: Creative councils in England. In: Valkama P, Bailey SJ and Anttiroiko A (eds) *Organizational Innovation in Public Services: Forms and Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13–26.
- Schmidt E, Groeneveld S and Van de Walle S (2017) A change management perspective on public sector cutback management: Towards a framework for analysis. *Public Management Review* 19(10): 1538–1555.
- Senge PM (1990) *The Fifth Discipline*. London: Doubleday.
- Senge PM (2006) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. London: Random House Digital, Inc.
- Talbot C and Talbot C (2014) Sir Humphrey and the professors: What does Whitehall want from academics? Policy@Manchester, Manchester University. Available at: [http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/faculty/policy/1008_Policy@Manchester_Senior_Civil_Servants_Survey_v4\(1\).pdf](http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/faculty/policy/1008_Policy@Manchester_Senior_Civil_Servants_Survey_v4(1).pdf) (accessed 23 November 2019).
- Tsang EWK (1997) Organizational learning and the learning organization: A dichotomy between descriptive and prescriptive research. *Human Relations* 50: 73–89.
- Wang CL and Ahmed PK (2003) Organisational learning: A critical review. *The Learning Organization* 10: 8–17.
- Werkman RA (2009) Understanding failure to change: A pluralistic approach and five patterns. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 30: 664–684.
- Wright BE, Christensen RK and Roussin Isett K (2013) Motivated to adapt? The role of public service motivation as employees face organizational change. *Public Administration Review* 73: 738–747.